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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

25X1

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25X1

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
10 July 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Egyptian-Israeli Military Incidents
on the Suez Canal Front

1. Clashes between Egyptian and Israeli forces in the Suez Canal area on 1, 2, 3, and 8 July were probably initiated by the Egyptians in an effort to refurbish their tarnished military image and to persuade the UN to arrange for immediate Israeli withdrawal.
2. Each side accused the other of violating the cease-fire on 1 July in an engagement opposite a guard station at Ras al-Ushsh, some ten miles south of Port Said on the east bank of the canal. According to the Egyptians, the incident occurred when the Israelis attempted to move on their positions at Port Fuad. The Israelis, however, claimed that two Egyptian platoons, accompanied by half-tracks and supported by mortar fire and some air activity, crossed the canal and exchanged fire with an Israeli patrol.

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25X1

6. The additional brief exchanges of fire at Ras al-Ushsh and farther south at Qantara on 2 and 3 July probably were similarly instigated by the Egyptians, although the situation may have been aggravated by aggressive Israeli patrolling. That one purpose of the Egyptians was to influence the vote in the UN is suggested by the fact that there were no incidents for five days following the UN's rejection of the two resolutions.

25X1

8. Although there is no specific confirmation of the fact that the 8 July clash along the canal was in fact initiated by the Egyptians, as the Israelis claim, there seems to be little reason to doubt it. According to Israeli officials, Egyptian artillery opened fire on Israeli positions at Ras al-Ushsh. Two Israelis were killed, and Israeli aircraft were sent to silence the Egyptian guns--a stepped-up response indicating that Israeli patience is beginning to wear thin. The resulting engagement ranged from Port Said and Port Fuad at the northern end of the canal south to Qantara, and involved aircraft, tanks, and heavy artillery. One Egyptian MIG-21 was shot down in a dogfight south of Port Said.

25X1

10. The Egyptian regime presumably has a variety of reasons for maintaining a continuing state of tension along the cease-fire line. It may still hope that dramatization of the instability in the area will influence the UN to call for Israeli withdrawal, and might perhaps induce the USSR to intervene. Meanwhile, it has something to point to in justifying the imposition of hardships on the Egyptian populace. It probably hopes to underscore its predominant position in Arab councils, and thinks that a state of war will help keep Arab unity--a fragile thing at best--in being. It is probably confident that its new Soviet weapons will help it to give a better account of itself, and may rebuild its military prestige. The Israelis, for their part,

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would seem to have nothing to gain by staging the incidents.

11. As the stepped-up Israeli response to the latest Egyptian harassment indicates, however, the Israelis may not put up with this situation indefinitely. One Israeli newspaper has already warned that "if Egypt continues its provocations, Israel will have to take the initiative to foil any such attempts in the future."

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